

Community resources

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Viewing cable 07MANAGUA1350, MISKITOS READY TO MOBILIZE BUT LACK RESOURCES

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- The top box shows each cable's unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07MANAGUA1350	2007-05-28 16:40	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 001350

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN SCHIFFER, DRL FOR MAGGIO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2017

TAGS: KDEM PGOV PHUM NU

SUBJECT: MISKITOS READY TO MOBILIZE BUT LACK RESOURCES

REF: MANAGUA 1078 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli for reason 1.4B

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Diverse anti-Sandinista Miskito groups in Nicaragua's North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) are slowly unifying into a single movement. Significant challenges remain, but the group is convinced of the need to win the municipal elections in four key RAAN municipalities in 2008 as a first step to wrest control of the indigenous YATAMA organization from the hands of President Ortega's important Atlantic Coast ally, Brooklyn Rivera (reftel). Miskito leaders warned that their communities are highly susceptible to manipulation due to poor education and severe economic hardship. They stressed the need for community level civic education, democracy and leadership training, and technical skills development to limit the impact of such manipulation in the 2008 elections. Leaders have vowed to break from the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance party (ALN) in the 2008 elections if party leadership cannot resolve its differences with the Liberal Constitutional Party (PLC) and unify. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) On May 18, Poloff met with 14 leaders of various pro-democracy Miskito groups opposing President Daniel Ortega to discuss the progress of unification efforts among the anti-Sandinista factions of the RAAN's Miskito population. Represented in the meeting were YATAMA No-Sandinista, two Miskito NGOs, the Council of Elders, an anti-Sandinista splinter group of the women's association AMICA, the Miskito political party PAMUC, and three religious organizations.

Anti-Ortega Opposition Groups Unified...Almost

¶3. (C) Over the past several months, pro-democracy Miskito community leaders opposing Ortega have started working together to keep the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) from gaining complete control over the Atlantic Coast region. Whereas economic hardship has traditionally divided the community -- as each group seeks short-term solutions to their specific problems -- the larger threat of Sandinista domination of the coast, to the exclusion of non-Sandinistas, is forcing the various community factions to work together. As a result, meeting participants indicated that some 90 percent of the opposition groups have united and signed a memorandum of understanding.

¶4. (C) However, significant challenges remain. While the various groups -- women, youth, elders, NGOs, business associations, political parties, religious communities, etc. -- have agreed in principle to work together, there is no formal structure to this new indigenous pro-democratic

"movement" and no consensus on whether such a structure is required before initiating outreach and education efforts in the broader Miskito communities. Further, the movement has not yet defined its strategy, core set of objectives, or the roles and responsibilities of the constituent groups within the strategy framework. Doing so is essential to identify and prioritize activities, articulate projects, and understand how individual projects and activities support the movement's objectives. (NOTE: To date, post has received proposals from various opposition groups asking for assistance specifically related to their narrow interest areas without demonstrating how their projects would support and advance the unified movement. END NOTE.)

15. (C) Although representatives recognized the need for some form of "umbrella" structure linking the various groups within the movement, they had given little thought to "branding" the movement. They had not discussed how to ensure that the beneficiaries of potential projects implemented within the Miskito communities would associate a specific project to the movement and its underlying democratic objectives. Poloff explained that project-level visibility for the movement -- demonstrating that the movement is responsible for the project and its subsequent benefits, even if executed through a particular NGO or organization -- is absolutely crucial to winning converts.

Step 1 2008 Elections, Step 2 Control of YATAMA

16. (C) Despite the relative nascence of the group's planning, there is consensus that all efforts must focus on winning the 2008 municipal elections in the RAAN's principal municipalities of Waspam, Prinzapolka, Rio Coco, and Puerto Cabezas. Doing so would severely undermine the power base of Brooklyn Rivera, president of the indigenous YATAMA organization and President Ortega's key ally, enforcer, and policy implementer in the RAAN. Although the majority of the Miskito people oppose Rivera, he has simply ignored previous general assemblies' calls for his resignation as YATAMA president because they lack the power to remove him. However, opposition victories in these municipalities, according to meeting attendees, would remove Rivera's formal power base, virtually guaranteeing that he would be forced to accept the election results of any subsequent general assembly held to elect new YATAMA leadership. Meeting participants clearly indicated that, more than the municipal victories themselves, removing Rivera and regaining control of YATAMA is their primary objective since they see it as the best way to thwart Ortega's efforts in the RAAN.

Underlying Goal - Local Capacity Building

17. (C) The participants universally agreed that the key to victory in the 2008 elections -- and thus in their bid to change YATAMA leadership -- is providing civic education, democracy training, leadership training, technical skills development, and micro-credit at the community level. Miskito leaders warned that Miskito communities are highly susceptible to manipulation due to generally low education levels and severe economic hardship. They added that the FSLN will exploit this weakness in the lead-up to the 2008 elections -- as it did in 2006 by misleading Miskitos about their rights under Nicaraguan laws and by doling out token assistance with promises of more in return for votes. Teaching the Miskitos about their basic rights, identifying and training leaders to think critically and ask tough questions, and providing micro-economic prospects will help ensure that communities are stronger and more independent. (NOTE: Post has received separate proposals from two Miskito NGOs -- FURCA for civic education and Aikuki Wal for leadership development and cooperative formation. Although the proposals were developed independently, we are encouraging the two organizations to synchronize community selection and coordinate development of training materials. Both have agreed to do so. We forwarded the FURCA proposal to DRL two months ago for funding consideration and the

Aikuki Wal proposal is in the final stage of translation.
END NOTE.)

Alliance with ALN in 2008 not Guaranteed

¶8. (C) Members from the YATAMA No-Sandinista movement and the indigenous PAMUC party underscored that their support for ALN candidates in 2008 is far from assured if the ALN cannot resolve its differences with the PLC at the national level. Recalling how the Liberal schism hurt the anti-Sandinista forces in the RAAN in the November 2006 elections, Miskito leaders have vowed to go their own way, if necessary, and the president of PAMUC declared that his party is ready to carry the standard for the Miskito population in 2008.

Comment

¶9. (C) Anti-Sandinista Miskito community leaders have hit the nail on the head. They understand perfectly that victory in the 2008 municipal elections is their only way to remove President Ortega's key Atlantic Coast ally, Brooklyn Rivera. They also understand with painful clarity that they will never achieve their goal without outside assistance. These pro-democracy leaders in the Miskito community are extremely poor, lacking the funds to visit even communities close to the RAAN's capital of Puerto Cabezas. Without assistance, visiting distant communities -- let alone providing intensive training -- will be impossible. The leaders were emphatic that now, more than ever before, is the time to act. Rivera has been weakened, the FSLN has yet to deliver on promised assistance, and the people of the RAAN are looking for help. They repeatedly warned that if the FSLN -- or its YATAMA allies -- win the 2008 elections, Ortega will be able to consolidate his position in the RAAN and it will be too late.

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